

NORTH CAROLINA BLUEBERRIES 2007 SEASON

The 2007 North Carolina blueberry crop was severely affected by spring freezes. On April 5 through April 10, blueberry fields in North Carolina were subjected to several nights of subfreezing temperatures, the lowest occurring on Easter Sunday morning, April 8. The “Easter Freeze” was not limited to North Carolina – crops were damaged throughout the southeastern United States. North Carolina blueberries were at an especially vulnerable stage of growth, some field temperatures reached the teens and severe damage occurred in both freeze-protected and non-irrigated fields. Earliest-ripening cultivars Star and O’Neal had passed bloom and were in the green fruit stage, while Croatan, our main cultivar in southeastern North Carolina, was near full bloom with 50 percent open blossoms. Duke, one of the last cultivars to bloom, had not reached the flowering stage and was in the bud break/tight cluster stage. Bloom stage determines freeze susceptibility with more advanced flowers and fruit at greater risk. Growers who had both sufficient water and warmer field sites were successful in protecting their crop. However, even “saved” fields had some damage in low areas or along edges where the freeze-protection sprinkler coverage was inadequate. Fields that did not have overhead irrigation for freeze protection had little or no crop remaining.

Pollination was poor during this freeze event because bees could not work the flowers. Many berries that were saved from freezing nevertheless fell off because they were not pollinated. This yield loss was very visible on Croatan during the first week of May as many small, unpollinated berries detached and fell to the ground. In general, the crop was reduced by 40 percent to 50 percent statewide. Individual growers suffered losses varying from 10 percent to 100 percent depending on the factors discussed above.

Price and volume data were obtained from six major shippers in the 2007 season. The first price reported for flats of 12-1 pint cups was on May 23. Prices ranged mostly \$28-\$30. The last f.o.b. price report was issued on June 29, with prices ranging mostly \$16.50-\$18.50. The first price reported for flats of 12-4.4 ounce cups with lids was on May 22. Prices ranged mostly \$14-\$16. The last f.o.b. price report was issued May 25, with prices ranging mostly \$14-\$14.50. Approximately 9.6 million pounds, an equivalent of 1.1 million 12 1-pint flats, were shipped for fresh market. There was also an additional 5.2 million pounds processed (frozen). This total (fresh + processed) of 14.8 million pounds is severely below the 25.5 million reported for the 2006 crop.

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FOB DATE	FLATS SHIPPED (1-pint cups)	PRICE PER FLAT (12 1-pint cups)		PRICE PER FLAT (4.4 oz cups)	
		Low	High	Low	High
14-May	303	-	-	-	-
15-May	0	-	-	-	-
16-May	1,372	-	-	-	-
17-May	1,392	-	-	-	-
18-May	739	-	-	-	-
19-May	2,081	-	-	-	-
20-May	0	-	-	-	-
21-May	10,396	-	-	-	-
22-May	23,601	-	-	14.00	16.00
23-May	15,907	28.00	30.00	12.00	14.00
24-May	15,728	30.00	30.00	12.00	14.00
25-May	24,919	30.00	30.00	14.00	14.50
26-May	7,940	-	-	-	-
27-May	0	-	-	-	-
28-May	31,222	-	-	-	-
29-May	40,163	24.00	28.00	-	-
30-May	40,982	24.00	28.00	-	-
31-May	36,359	20.00	22.00	-	-
01-Jun	46,517	20.00	22.50	-	-
02-Jun	27,953	-	-	-	-
03-Jun	22,000	-	-	-	-
04-Jun	37,361	20.00	22.00	-	-
05-Jun	46,906	20.00	22.00	-	-
06-Jun	55,647	20.00	22.00	-	-
07-Jun	48,563	20.00	20.50	-	-
08-Jun	42,356	20.00	20.00	-	-
09-Jun	44,703	-	-	-	-
10-Jun	5,144	-	-	-	-
11-Jun	60,577	20.00	20.00	-	-
12-Jun	38,683	20.00	20.00	-	-
13-Jun	27,941	20.00	20.50	-	-
14-Jun	31,311	20.00	20.50	-	-
15-Jun	18,717	20.00	22.00	-	-
16-Jun	15,315	-	-	-	-
17-Jun	3,500	-	-	-	-
18-Jun	20,060	18.50	20.50	-	-
19-Jun	28,237	18.50	20.50	-	-
20-Jun	15,863	20.00	20.50	-	-
21-Jun	12,697	20.00	20.50	-	-

NORTH CAROLINA BLUEBERRIES 2007 SEASON (continued)

FOB DATE	FLATS SHIPPED (1-pint cups)	PRICE PER FLAT (12 1-pint cups)		PRICE PER FLAT (4.4 oz cups)	
		LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
22-Jun	27,571	18.50	20.00	-	-
23-Jun	18,140	-	-	-	-
24-Jun	0	-	-	-	-
25-Jun	13,438	18.00	19.00	-	-
26-Jun	13,324	18.00	20.00	-	-
27-Jun	13,278	18.00	20.00	-	-
28-Jun	7,330	16.50	18.50	-	-
29-Jun	15,281	16.50	18.50	-	-
30-Jun	5,880	-	-	-	-
01-Jul	0	-	-	-	-
02-Jul	6,392	-	-	-	-
03-Jul	6,104	-	-	-	-
04-Jul	362	-	-	-	-
05-Jul	7,440	-	-	-	-
06-Jul	6,019	-	-	-	-
07-Jul	3,380	-	-	-	-
08-Jul	0	-	-	-	-
09-Jul	4,680	-	-	-	-
10-Jul	2,640	-	-	-	-
11-Jul	3,880	-	-	-	-
12-Jul	2,880	-	-	-	-
13-Jul	2,880	-	-	-	-
14-Jul	1,584	-	-	-	-
TOTAL FLATS	1,065,611				